



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

BETTER TOGETHER

YMCA of Southern Maine | 2018–2019 Annual Report



AT THE Y, WE BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF COMMUNITY.

We believe in building communities through programs and services that allow people to learn new skills, grow as individuals, and thrive. But, perhaps our greatest strength is our ability to bring people together.

In a world divided by political ideologies, the Y is a place to come together. We are one of the few places where people gather from every religion, identity, political belief, and area of the world. We believe this diversity makes us stronger.

The connections built at the Y—often with people we wouldn't meet anywhere else—give us meaning and foster friendships that strengthen who we are and how we experience our community.

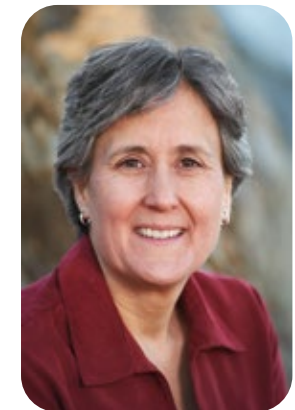
Last year, more than 30,000 people walked through our doors. While they came to swim, or learn, or achieve a goal, they received something much greater—the gift of connection. A new grandparent, mentor, or friend, the possibilities for who might come into our lives at the Y are endless and profound.

Next time you are at the Y, say hello to the person beside you. This simple act can mean the world to someone else. And this is what our community needs now more than ever. Reach out when others divide. Bravely bridge those gaps.

**Together, as a community, we will
make the world a better place for us all.**



Jenna Klein Jonsson
Chief Volunteer Officer



Helen L. Breña
President & Chief Executive Officer



**“If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go together.”**

—African Proverb



BEN & AIDEN

The best part of swim team is the ‘team’ part—then everything falls into place, gives you purpose in life.

In this simple statement, swim team senior Ben Cox-Faxon, 18, captures the spirit of the Y community. He and his teammates embody this at each swim meet and practice.

In fact, every time Ben finishes a race, he’s greeted by fellow swimmer Aiden Webber, 11, who faithfully shares encouraging words and high fives. Aiden does this because he’s received similar support and encouragement from teammates like Ben.

Last season, after a disappointing race, Aiden was feeling pretty defeated. Ben sought him out to share feedback about the swim. In doing so, Ben helped Aiden see that even disappointing races can offer a positive learning experience.

Ben’s kindness and support made a real difference to Aiden. He trusts Ben because Ben experienced similar struggles when he was a younger swimmer. When Ben was Aiden’s age, encouragement from his older teammates kept him going.

Now Ben is carrying on the tradition. He makes a point to share advice with Aiden and his younger teammates, and is there to cheer them on through victories and defeats.

“Ben has already gone through [this]...,” explains Aiden. “He understood how I felt and knew exactly how to help.”

Both swimmers know that when we share our experiences, the good and the bad, our wellbeing thrives. Ben is also helped by this friendship.

“You remember the position that you looked up to when you were a kid,” Ben reflects. “And it feels good to add to the team. It’s rewarding.”

While other swim teams may focus on the competition, the Y swim team works to foster growth in young people and supports them as they work to achieve their best, both in the water and in the world. The team becomes a family as they encourage each other and celebrate their growth.

“Kids know deep down who is genuine,” shares Suzi Boccanfuso, Head Coach of the Stripers Swim Team. “Ben truly cares about Aiden and his teammates, and that builds trust and a sense of community.”

Ben, Aiden, Suzi, and others are able to create a supportive team thanks to the Y’s community focus.

Aiden has noticed that at the Y, “people really like to help other people out. Like ‘hey, I see that you’re struggling, would you like some help?’” He goes on to share that, “We have this thing where we never say ‘can’t’ without [adding] ‘yet.’ Like, there’s no ‘I can’t do this,’ it’s always ‘I can’t do this yet.’”

The Y has taught Ben to really commit himself to something important. And in serving as a role model to Aiden, Ben learned to embrace the “not yet” attitude.

This gave Aiden a peer and role model to look up to and emulate. Coach Suzi believes Aiden will “pay that forward as he ages up into a leadership role.”

Ben started college this year, leaving a space on the team for new role models. Ben enthusiastically believes that Aiden is ready for this new role. His advice to the younger swimmer?

“Keep crushing it, you’ve got a lot of people looking up to you.”



“The bond that links your true family is not one of blood, but of respect and joy in each other’s life.”

—Richard Bach



DONNA & BIRINDWA

They say friendship sweetens life. That's certainly true for Birindwa, a participant in the Y's GROW program, a housing support initiative serving over 110 men each year. Birindwa remembers when he first met his friend Donna—she was visiting the Y with treats for GROW participants, something she'd been doing for several years.

"I saw her coming to the Y, giving items as she usually does," he shares, smiling. "She had goodies in her bag and she would come to everybody sitting [in the lobby]."

Maine is admittedly small, but it seems improbable that these two friends would have met had it not been for the Y, because Donna and Birindwa come from vastly different worlds.

Donna was born and raised in Portland, Maine. After a career in the airline industry, she returned home to care for her mother. When she read an article about a participant of the GROW program two years ago, she knew she wanted to help, so she started bringing things she knew the men would need to the Y.

Birindwa was born and raised in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where he had a career in orthopedics. He worked for a non-governmental organization making prosthetic devices for people who had lost or injured their limbs. Later, he studied IT and eventually started a training center, helping students even when they couldn't afford to pay him.

"I like to help," Birindwa explains. "Especially when there's an opportunity for me to help."

Helping others is a family tradition. Birindwa recalls his grandmother's generosity to her neighbors. She owned her own business and never turned away anyone.

Last year, Birindwa immigrated to Maine and currently lives in the Y's dormitory. He has started volunteering at the Y while he settles into life here. It's helped as he works to build a life in his new country.

A few months after meeting at the GROW program, Birindwa and Donna ran into each other. Birindwa,

or "B" as Donna affectionately calls him, was waiting for the bus and said hello to Donna, who offered him a ride home. Donna's generosity immediately brought back happy memories of his grandmother, who now lives thousands of miles away in his home country.

"It's like my grandmother came back," he marvels, "But in a different form."

During their drive back to the Y, Donna and Birindwa talked about life. "I said I would try to help him a little," Donna recalls. "He said, 'okay' and we've been off and running since then!"

At first, it was a challenge to communicate because Birindwa spoke French and Donna spoke English, but they figured out how to communicate, learning from each other along the way.

Donna teaches Birindwa English, Birindwa teaches Donna patience. Birindwa introduces Donna to his friends, Donna introduces Birindwa to new types of food (Vietnamese is a new favorite).

Sometimes Donna and Birindwa go out to eat, sometimes they shop for clothes or groceries, but always they laugh.

"My grandmother, she was serious," Birindwa says with warmth. "Also I see Donna is kind, gentle, but sometimes she's tough, and that makes me laugh in my heart."

Family comes in all shapes and sizes, and sometimes from across the world. "It has been quite the relationship—we've done a lot... We're good friends," Donna marvels.

Had I not been coming to the Y, I doubt that we would have had that kind of [an] opportunity to meet. It's just been a blessing.



**“The greatness of a community is most accurately
measured by the compassionate actions of its members.”**

—Coretta Scott King



Jeanine, Lee, Joan, and Al

LEE & FRIENDS

When Lee Pittman was diagnosed with fibromyalgia in the early 90s, her doctor suggested that she try some of the aquatics classes at the Y. She never expected that would lead to her teaching the Joints in Aqua class at the Northern York County branch for 25 years and, as a result, creating a community that extends outside the walls of the branch.

"I really enjoyed it and it was helping me. The camaraderie is awesome, so I continued on," explains Lee.

Camaraderie is a word that comes up over and over again when Lee talks with fellow volunteer instructor Jeanine Demers and class regulars Joan Madden and Al Rogers. "We all have one another. We're just like family," describes Lee.

All four started taking the class because of various health issues: surgeries, diagnoses, deterioration. But they've stayed because the class keeps their doctors happy and it keeps them happy. "This is an outlet, a healthy outlet, and it's a social outlet," says Joan. "It's just a part of my life. I miss it if I don't come. My body tells me it misses it."

When they're in the water, Joan says that everyone tries to concentrate on class. "That's what we should be doing anyway. But you still feel it's a social thing as well."

While the class warms up, everyone catches up with each other. There's an interlude later in the class for announcements so everyone can keep up with what's going on in each other's lives. Sometimes it's good news, sometimes it's not good news.

"People will help each other," describes Jeanine, who, like Lee, has been volunteering to teach the class for more than 20 years. "They'll call each other if someone doesn't show up. People make a point of calling to see how someone's doing and then tell the rest of us. If somebody's having surgery, we send a card that everybody signs. Little things like that to help give a sense of belonging."

Jeanine started a little free library in the lobby and a lunch group that meets after class on Fridays. She plans trips to Portland for anyone in the class that wants to go. "These are little things that we do to build a community."

The connection extends even further. Al goes to Florida in the winter, but he spends his time there looking forward to coming back. The class, he says, "builds up your spirit a little better."

Lee adds liveliness to class by adding songs to some of the exercises. Everyone's faces light up when Lee says that it's time to row our boats. A chorus of "Row, row, row your boat..." starts up as the class does an exercise remarkably similar to rowing a boat. Lee says it helps people remember, but also "it's just to make it fun."

Many people contribute to our sense of community at the Y, but rarely has anyone had an impact as long as Lee,

explained Meaghan Woodsome, Branch Executive at Northern York County. "She has been an invaluable volunteer for our branch, and I've loved watching how her class brings people together. Our community is better off because of her kind and giving nature that gives people a sense of belonging here."

Outside of class, the friends see each other at regular Active Older Adults potlucks at the branch and there's a group that gets lunch together after the Friday class. Lee's jam and Jeanine's corn pudding are famous in their circle.

"We're all different," Al reflects about the group of people who frequent the Joints in Aqua class. "We're marching to the beat of a different drummer and still trying to listen to Lee."

"[The Y] is not just a business," concludes Al. "It brings people together."

LAST YEAR AT THE Y...

30,127

PEOPLE WERE BROUGHT TOGETHER



10,387

PEOPLE WERE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY
TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS AT THE Y
THANKS TO FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
AND PROGRAM SUPPORT



5,668

ACTIVE OLDER ADULTS CONNECTED WITH
EACH OTHER, COMBATING SOCIAL ISOLATION



421

NEW AND NATIVE MAINERS UNITED
THROUGH OUR NEW AMERICAN
WELCOME CENTER



75,771

HOURS WHERE PEOPLE CAME TOGETHER
IN OUR GROUP EXERCISE CLASSES



37,686

FREE SNACKS AND MEALS WERE SHARED
IN OUR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS



144

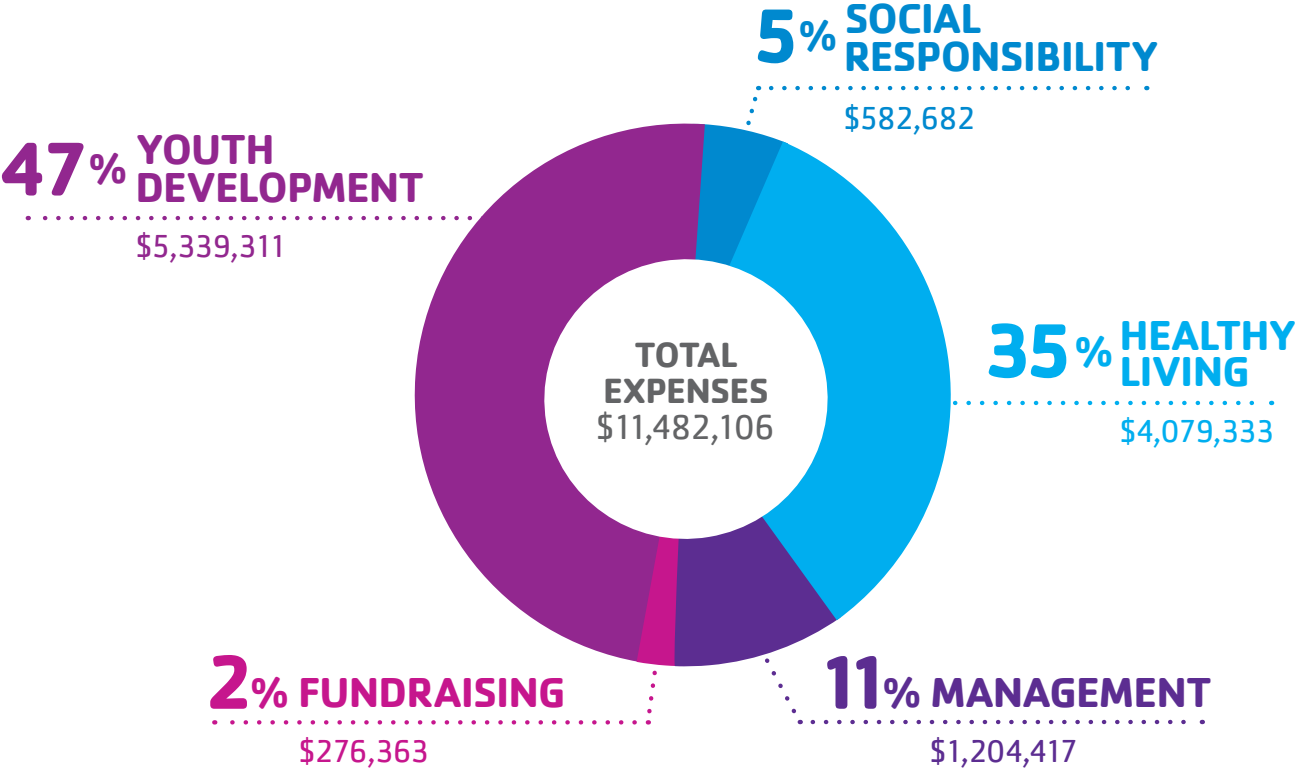
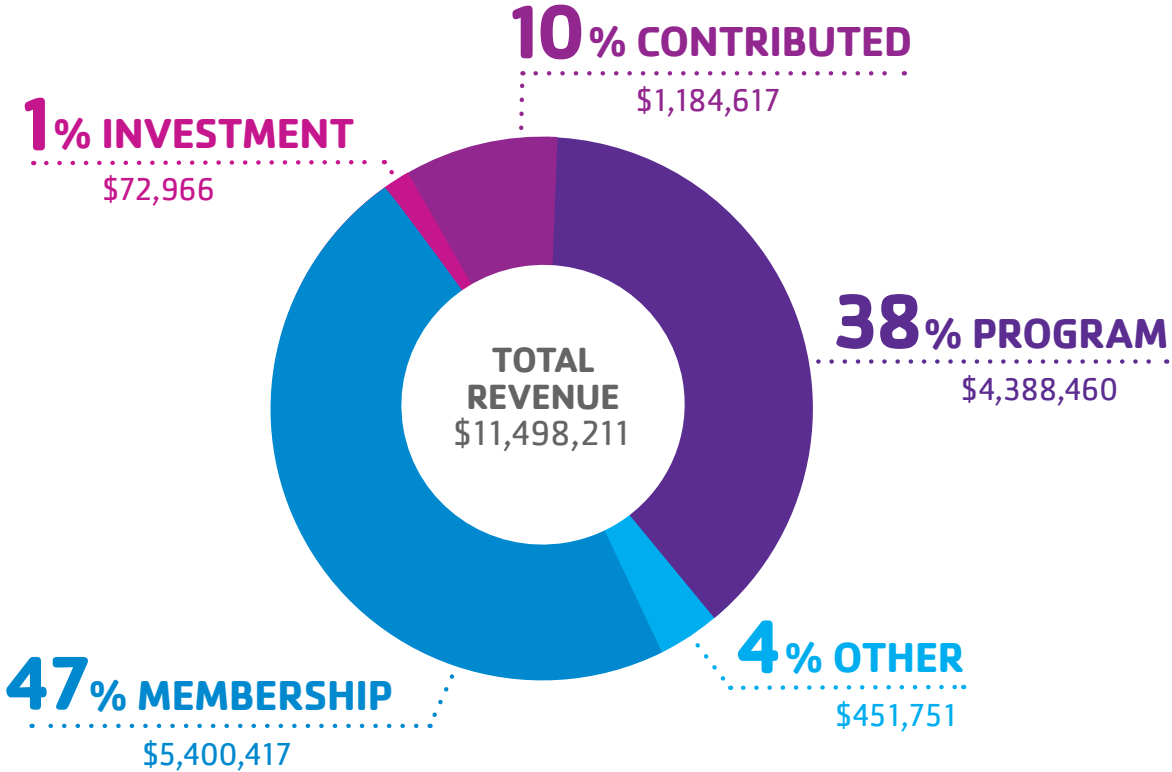
HOUSING SUPPORT PARTICIPANTS
GAINED A NURTURING COMMUNITY





FINANCIALS

NOTES
2018–2019 Depreciation: \$611,775
G+A expenses total 13% of total expenses



LEADERSHIP

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Ryan Kane
Treasurer

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Beth Austin*
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Vaughn Clark
Caitlin Dwyer
Kathi Ewen
Katie Ewen*
Deanna Harnett
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Michael Rayder*

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President & Chief Executive Officer

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Northe Saunders
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PINELAND

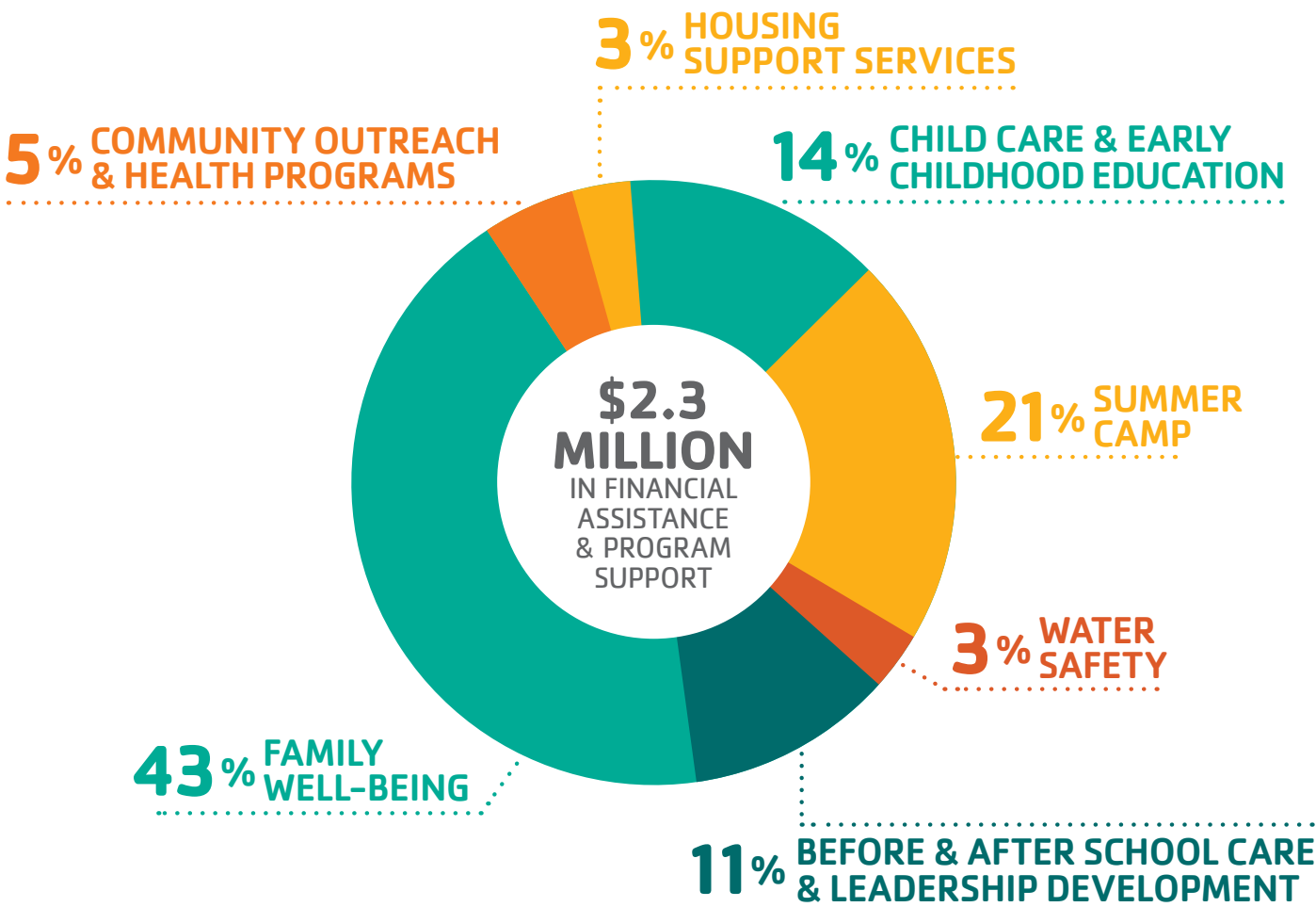
Gregory Goding





OUR MISSION

To build strong kids, individuals, families, and communities through programs and services that promote a healthy spirit, mind, & body for all, regardless of ability to pay.



The YMCA of Southern Maine is dedicated to celebrating diversity and fostering an inclusive community for all.

